



## FAQs

### **What is the RainScapes Program?**

The RainScapes program is a program of the Montgomery County Department of Environmental protection in the Watershed Management Division

### **What is the mission of the RainScapes Program?**

The mission of the RainScapes Program is to promote sustainable stormwater management practices throughout Montgomery County that support the County's water quality and runoff reduction requirements for its NPDES MS 4 Permit.

### **What is an NPDES MS4 permit?**

The National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) municipal separate storm sewer system (MS4) permit is a Federal Clean Water Act program to control discharges through the storm drain system. For more information on the County's program, see [www.montgomerycountymd.gov/deptmpl.asp?url=/content/dep/NPDES/home.asp](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/deptmpl.asp?url=/content/dep/NPDES/home.asp)

### **What is the RainScapes Rewards Program?**

The RainScapes Rewards Program is an incentive program to encourage individual property owners to build and maintain source control stormwater management on their properties. The program offers homeowners and property owners financial incentives to reduce stormwater runoff from yards, roofs, parking areas and other impervious surfaces.

### **What is a stormwater source control?**

A stormwater source control is a tool used to treat rainwater as close to the place that it falls upon. The goal is to preserve or restore a site's hydrologic functionality to that of predevelopment conditions. In Montgomery County, this means a forest hydrology condition which infiltrates or evapotranspires all but 3% of the rainwater.



### **Who is eligible for a RainScapes Rewards Rebate?**

The RainScapes Rewards Rebate is available to Montgomery County Maryland property owners who live outside of the limits of the Cities of Rockville, Gaithersburg and Takoma Park. All RainScapes projects are voluntary and are not eligible if they are being used to meet a building permit requirement.

### **I rent my residence; can I do a Rainscapes Rewards Rebate project and get reimbursed?**

Tenants are permitted to do a Rainscapes Rewards Rebate project with the permission of the property owner. Money will be rebated to the tenant for costs incurred as per the rebate reimbursement guidelines, but the property owner agreement must be signed by the property owner to ensure that the owner understands the maintenance expectations for Rainscapes Rewards projects. Alternatively, many tenants are also members of organizations which are eligible for rebates and could choose to work with their organization to install RainScapes projects on organization land.

### **Why use RainScapes stormwater source controls?**

RainScapes methods are proven low impact development (LID) methods for stormwater management which provide multiple benefits for a reasonably low cost. Many of the methods to reduce runoff are landscaping practices; all RainScapes practices work to reduce runoff volume, reduce local flooding, recharge ground water, & reduce lawn-care chemical use and mowing time. This serves to improve the quality of water entering local waterways, save money by reducing water needs and energy costs, improve natural habitat and add beautiful features to landscapes which could enhance property values.

### **What are the stormwater source controls that are eligible for rebates under the RainScapes Rewards program?**

Rain Gardens, Conservation Landscaping (Turf replacement), Urban Tree Canopy replacement, Permeable Interlocking Concrete Pavers, Green Roofs, Rain Barrels, Cisterns and Dry Wells

**What are the rebate amounts available to property owners and businesses?**

<b>RainScapes Practice/ <u>Maximum</u> Rebate amounts*</b>	<b><i>Residential</i></b>	<b><i>Commercial, Multi-Family, Institutional</i></b>
<b>Rain Garden</b>	\$1200	\$5000 cap based on \$.50 sf impervious area treated or \$2500/rain garden ; note: whichever is greater - \$2500 or \$.50/sf area treated will be rebated
<b>Replacement of turf with Conservation Landscaping</b>	\$500	\$3000 (based on 50% of actual cost)
<b>Urban Tree Canopy</b>	\$600 per lot	\$600 per lot
<b>Permeable Pavers</b>	\$1200	\$5000
<b>Green Roofs</b>	\$1200	\$5000
<b>Rain Barrels</b>	\$ 200	\$ 200
<b>Cisterns</b>	\$ 500 (\$1/gallon stored)	\$ 2000 (\$1/gallon stored)
<b>Dry wells</b>	\$ 300 based on 50% of actual cost	\$ 300 based on 50% of actual cost

*\*size and number constraints apply for each practice*

***Rebate amounts shown in the chart are for FY 2009***

**May I apply for rebates over several years?**

Yes, up to the maximum amount per property. Once the maximum (\$1200/SF, \$5000 for MF/Commercial/Institutional) has been rebated, a property is not eligible for further rebate at this time.

**What is the procedure for application for a RainScapes Rewards Rebate?**

Go to rainscapes.org and download the application. Select the project type which seems suitable for your property, and fill out the application. Submit the application to [rainscapes.application@montgomerycountymd.gov](mailto:rainscapes.application@montgomerycountymd.gov) for approval before you begin construction or installation.

### **How do I find a contractor to help me build or install a RainScapes Rewards project?**

Qualified contractors are able to provide references for similar projects. The DEP is developing contractor training so that we can post a list of firms which have taken our training. The attendees from the March 27, 2009 session are listed on our Rainscapes website.

### **What is a Targeted Neighborhood and how is it different than an area for RainScapes Rewards Rebates?**

A targeted neighborhood is a sub-watershed scale area which is selected for more intensive stormwater retrofit efforts due to several factors. This may include other retrofit and restoration efforts being done in the area, need for more intensive efforts due to extreme degradation and active watershed group presence which can partner with DEP to support the effort.

### **Why are there Targeted Neighborhoods?**

Targeted neighborhoods will serve as data sources for the impact of RainScapes practices at the subwatershed scale in Montgomery County. The County has set a goal that a minimum of 30% of targeted neighborhood properties will have some form of stormwater source control retrofit onto them after the program has been applied in the neighborhood.

### **How does a neighborhood qualify as a Targeted Neighborhood?**

This is a determination made by DEP based on watershed condition and other factors.

### **What is the procedure for application for a project in a Targeted Neighborhood?**

Properties are identified by county surveys of individual lots. If your property is an identified lot, you will be contacted by DEP Rainscapes. Projects which are in the targeted neighborhood but not on a targeted property may apply to the RainScapes Rewards program after the neighborhood assessment has been completed.

### **What is a rain garden?**

A rain garden is a garden that is designed to process a predicted volume of stormwater based on a known drainage area and predicted rainfall amount.

### **How do rain gardens work?**

Rain gardens are shallow depressions in the ground and act as a temporary holding “bowl” for up to 36 hours before the water is drained out of the garden. The surface of the rain garden is typically 6” lower than the surrounding area.

### **How is a rain garden different from a regular garden?**

Rain gardens for the RainScapes program are required to use a bioretention soil replacement. Rain gardens are to be excavated 30” and 24” of the bioretention soil is placed into the area. Plants for rain gardens must be tolerant of both the extremes of moisture – very wet and very dry.

### **How do I get started if I want to build a rain garden?**

Identify the drainage area (usually the roof area) and calculate a square foot area for the garden based on 20% of the drainage area. Locate the possible spot for the rain garden and do a percolation (perc) test. Further details are included in the rain garden application form.

### **What kind of maintenance does a rain garden require?**

Rain garden maintenance is similar to that of a typical garden. During the establishment period, additional water should be supplied. Mulch should be applied 3” deep. Mulch should be removed and replaced with fresh mulch annually.

### **What is conservation landscaping?**

Conservation landscaping is removing turf areas (the square foot area is specified in the Conservation landscaping application) and replanting with habitat supporting species. 75% of the plants selected should be native to the Chesapeake Bay Watershed.

### **Why are only certain watersheds eligible for the Urban Tree Rebate?**

The watersheds named in the Urban Tree Rebate are those which have lost a significant portion of their Urban Tree Canopy. This rebate is to encourage tree planting in those areas and tree placement on the property should be done to provide shading of impervious surfaces and Heating/cooling units.

### **Why aren't dogwoods or other ornamental trees included on the Urban Tree list?**

The only trees included are canopy trees native to Montgomery County. The ornamental and understory trees such as dogwoods are too small to qualify.

### **What are permeable interlocking concrete pavers?**

Permeable interlocking concrete pavers are the blocks used in Permeable interlocking concrete pavement (PICP). They are not pervious. Each block has spacers built into it to keep the space between blocks consistent and allow water to drain through.

### **How do permeable interlocking pavers work?**

The joint spaces between the pavers are filled with a washed coarse aggregate which allows water to drain through.

### **Where can I get more information on permeable interlocking concrete pavers?**

[icpi.org](http://icpi.org)

### **What is a green roof?**

For RainScapes, a green roof is a vegetated roof. Extensive roof systems on retrofits (i.e. reroofing) are eligible.

### **What is an extensive green roof?**

There are two terms used for vegetated green roofs: extensive and intensive. Intensive green roofs have planting media depth > 6" and can support larger plants. They are capable of capturing more water than and extensive green roof but they require a higher roof load bearing strength and more maintenance. An extensive green roof is typically relatively flat and, for RainScapes, should not be deeper than 4" of planting media.

### **How does a green roof work?**

The planting media and plants on a 4" deep extensive green roof are capable of capturing the first inch of rainfall, assuming that the roof is not already saturated from a previous rain event. Water that is not captured runs off the roof through the roof drains to downspouts.

**What is a rain barrel?**

A rain barrel is a small water harvesting tool which diverts water from a downspout and collects it. A typical rain barrel is 55 gallons but some may be as large as 125 gallons.

**Why do rain barrels need to have overflow pipes?**

To capture all of the roof runoff will require more than one barrel so barrels are required to have an overflow pipe which should be directed either to an adjacent vegetated area (away from the foundation) or back into the downspout. A 1" of rainfall on a 1000 square foot roof generates 623 gallons of roof runoff.

**Where can I get a rain barrel?**

The DEP sponsors rain barrel workshops and posts information about area workshops on the Rainscapes.org website. Garden supply vendors also have a variety of options and Aquabarrel in Gaithersburg is a local supplier.

**How is a cistern different from a rain barrel?**

A cistern is larger and may use electricity to pump water out. It may require a permit depending on the pump wiring used. Cisterns may be below grade, partially buried or above grade.

**What is a dry well?**

A dry well is a below ground trench or pit which is filled with drainage stone and captures water from downspouts or driveway and patio runoff. A perc. test is required and the drywell should be sized according to county dry well standards.